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SUBJECT: ARGENTINA'S AMBASSADOR-DESIGNATE TO THE U.S. TERMS  
BILATERAL RELATIONS "POLITICALLY...VERY BAD"

Classified By: Ambassador E. Anthony Wayne for reasons 1.4 (b) & (d).

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Argentine media broadcast remarks critical of the U.S. by the GOA's Ambassador-designate to Washington (ref C), Hector Timerman, who said "politically relations with the U.S. are very bad" because certain "sectors linked to DOJ and U.S. intelligence agencies" were troubled by Argentina's relationship with Venezuela. He singled out former WHA A/S Roger Noriega as an "expert provocateur" bent on destabilizing Latin American countries. Timerman, who is a journalist himself, told the Ambassador that the media coverage of his December 18 Senate confirmation hearing had focused exclusively on his off-the-cuff remarks rather than his prepared opening statement, in which he described cooperation with the United States as "excellent. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) The GOA's Ambassador-designate to Washington (ref C), Hector Timerman, appeared before the Argentine Senate December 18 and said "politically, relations with the U.S. are very bad." Timerman's comments were broadcast on television and radio and published in the leading newspapers. He claimed certain "sectors" in Washington were troubled by Argentina's relationship with Venezuela and later told journalists those sectors were "linked to DOJ and U.S. intelligence agencies." He said the same CIA that in the 1960s poisoned Castro's beard in hopes of emasculating him was capable of other errors in judgment today. According to Timerman, "Someone in Washington looked in the backyard and did not like what he saw," including the creation of Chavez-inspired Banco del Sur and Argentina's leadership in the region.

¶3. (SBU) Timerman said it was up to the USG to make a "gesture" to improve relations. To the press, he clarified that the appropriate gesture would be U.S. extradition of Antonini-Wilson, "the only person who can help solve this mess. Timerman also referred to former WHA A/S Roger Noriega as an "expert provocateur who has participated in the destabilization of democratic regimes since the 1980s."

¶4. (SBU) At the conclusion of Timerman's Senate hearing, opposition leader Sen. Gerardo Morales (UCR) said the GOA "has done nothing but block the clarification of the case involving Antonini-Wilson's suitcase with the \$800,000."

¶5. (SBU) With reference to Timerman's assignment to Washington, a prominent columnist in "Clarín," the largest circulation newspaper, claimed a U.S. official in Washington had told him the USG might let the GOA's request for Timerman's agreement "hibernate." (The column, citing the same unnamed source, also claimed, however, that Washington

was considering recalling Ambassador Wayne for "consultations."

¶6. (C) In a December 19 conversation, Timerman (protect strictly) claimed that in his prepared opening statement he had listed several areas, such as joint efforts against terrorism, narco-trafficking and money laundering, where cooperation with the United States was "excellent." (The Embassy has asked the MFA for the text of Timerman's prepared statement, since it did not get the media play that his other remarks did.) Timerman said he was put on the spot by a question from a senator asking if relations with the U.S. were good, and that he felt obliged in this public confirmation hearing to coincide with President Kirchner's characterizations and those of former President Nestor Kirchner (reftels). Timerman said he was trying to reflect the reality that, from a GOA perspective, relations now are politically very bad.

¶7. (C) Timerman told the Ambassador he very much wanted to work to turn the "politically bad" state of relations around. He said he owes much to the United States, where he lived during Argentina's last military dictatorship, and had been asked by Cristina Kirchner to serve as ambassador specifically to give new impetus to the relationship and to create new opportunities. He was clearly troubled by the current state of affairs.

WAYNE